

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02
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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5952
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0546

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, RH, SF
SUBJ:IAN SMITH PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING MEETING WITH
BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY

1. SUMMARY. AT HIS 30-MINUTE PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 13 FOLLOWING
FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S MEETING WITH NEWSMEN (CAPE TOWN 0545),
IAN SMITH SAID HE AND OWEN HAD NOT MADE MUCH PROGRESS IN
THEIR 3-HOURS "SINCERE AND HONEST" TALKS EARLIER IN THE DAY.
HE CONSIDERED IT "UNDERSTANDABLE." HE STRESS THEY HAD AGREED
THAT SOME MONTHS OF PREPARATORY WORK AND ANALYSIS WOULD BE
NEEDED TO DETERMINE WHETHER TO GO AHEAD WITH OWEN'S PROPOSED
CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE, WHICH AT THIS STAGE WAS "A BIT
VAGUE." HE WELCOMED THE PROVISION OF US PARTICIPATION AND
SAID HE WAS NEITHER MORE NOR LESS HOPEFUL ABOUT ACHIEVING A
SETTLEMENT THAN HE WAS LAST YEAR. SMITH NOTED PARTICULARLY
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THAT RHODESIA WAS "KEEPING ALL OPTIONS OPEN", INCLUDING
CONTINUING CONSIDERATION OF AN INTERNAL SOLUTION. END
SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT, SMITH SAID HE AND OWEN HAD "NOT
MADE A GREAT DEAL OF PROGRESS," WHICH WAS "UNDERSTANDABLE"
SINCE THIS WAS THEIR FIRST MEETING AND OWEN WAS NEW AS

FOREIGN SECRETARY. OWEN'S ACCEPTANCE OF SMITH'S INVITATION TO VISIT RHODESIA WAS "THE ONE FIRM, POSITIVE AGREEMENT" REACHED. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY HAD PUT FORWARD HIS PROPOSAL FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE WITH THE US AS CO-CONVENEER. THEY HAD AGREED THAT THERE WAS "QUITE A LOT OF PREPARATORY WORK" TO DO IN EXAMINING THE MECHANICS OF SUCH A CONFERENCE. IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE SURE OF AVOIDING A "DEBACLE" SUCH AS HAD OCCURRED AT GENEVA. SMITH THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE "SEVERAL WEEK IF NOT MONTHS" TO DECIDE WHETHER TO PROCEED. HE CHARACTERIZED THE 3-HOUR DISCUSSION AS "SINCERE AND HONEST" AND HE WAS SURE THE BRITISH WERE AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING RHODESIA AS WELL AS THE WHOLE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

3. DURING THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD, SMITH RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE NEED FOR SOME MONTHS OF CAREFUL STUDY OF OWEN'S PROPOSALS, WHICH AT PRESENT WERE "A BIT VAGUE." ONLY THEN WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT WAS "A STARTER." HE HAD NOT BEEN ASKED BY OWEN TO REPEAT HIS EARLIER PLEDGE ON MAJORITY RULE, BUT THE MATTER HAD BEEN DISCUSSED. NO SPECIFIC TIME TABLE FOR FINAL SETTLEMENT HAD BEEN SET, THOUGH OWEN, LIKE OTHERS, HAD HIS EYE ON 1978 "IN KEEPING WITH THE TIME-SPAN OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN AGREEMENT." NO COMMITMENTS WERE MADE ON TIMING. RHODESIA WAS NOT ARGUING ABOUT DATES OR TRYING TO DELAY ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE. PARTICIPATION IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE WAS ONE OF THE MANY ISSUES TO BE STUDIED. WHETHER PEOPLE LIKE MUGABE COULD TAKE PART IN THE ELECTIONS TO FOLLOW AGREEMENT ON A CONSTITUTION WOULD "DEPEND ON A NUMBER OF CIRCUMSTANCES", INCLUDING ACCEPTANCE

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OF THE ARRANGEMENTS MADE AND ABANDONMENT OF TERRORISM. SMITH WELCOMED PROVISION FOR INCREASED US INVOLVEMENT. "THE SUREST WAY TO SUCCESS" WAS TO BRING IN THE "POWER AND MUSCLE" OF THE "LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD." ASKED HOW HE WOULD RATE THE OWEN PROPOSALS AGAINST EARLIER INITIATIVES ON RHODESIA, SMITH SAID IT WAS TOO EARLY TO SAY. OWEN'S IDEAS WERE NOT YET CLEAR; HE COULD ANSWER THE QUESTION MORE ADEQUATELY IN A FEW MONTHS' TIME. THERE WAS A LONG WAY TO GO BUT "WHILE THERE IS LIFE THERE IS HOPE."

4. SMITH EMPHASIZED THAT RHODESIA WAS "KEEPING ALL OPTIONS OPEN," SINCE THE SUCCESS OF OWEN'S APPROACH WAS NOT ASSURED. THE IDEA OF A REFERENDUM IN CONNECTION WITH AN INTERNAL SOLUTION WOULD BE KEPT IN MIND. THE CONCEPT HAD ORIGINATED WITH MUZOREWA AND THE RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN CONSIDERING THE MECHANICS. IT WAS MORE COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT THAN ONE MIGHT IMAGINE, BUT IT WAS "AN EXERCISE WHICH CAN BE CARRIED OUT." IT MUST CONTINUE TO BE ANALYSED. "WE ARE NOT GOING TO CLOSE ANY DOORS."

5. SMITH FOUND THE BRITISH "FOR SOME REASON" HAD SHIFTED OVER THE YEARS BETWEEN FLEXIBILITY AND INFLEXIBILITY. BUT BASICALLY THEY WERE REALISTIC "AS ARE MOST POLITICIANS." HE EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR THE "WELL-KNOWN, SIMPLE, STRAIGHT-FORWARD ROLE" OF HONEST BROKER SOUTH AFRICAN HAD CONSISTENTLY PLAYED IN THE EFFORTS TO REACH A SOLUTION TO THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM.

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